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Single-track plantationism vs. multi-track

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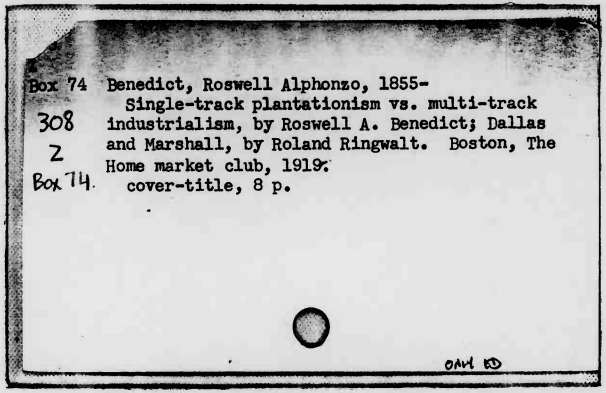
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Single-Track Plantationism

vs.

Multi-Track Industrialism

By

Roswell A. Benedict

Dallas and Marshall

By

Roland Ringwalt

Published by
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SINGLE-TRACK PLANTATIONISM
vs.
MULTI-TRACK INDUSTRIALISM

By Roswell A. Benedict.

This is the issue now being fought out in the United States Senate, with the plantationists representing Mr. Wilson on the one side and the industrialists, representing all organized industry, North, South, East and West, throughout our whole blessed country, on the other. It is merely the question of either returning to baronial, plantation feudalism or pressing forward further still on the road to perfect democracy, under a constitutional government, guaranteeing equal rights and equal protection for all men, without reference to color or previous condition of servitude. Happily the last election changed the complexion of our Senate from that of the plantationist to that of the universal industrialists; and that is all which now stands between us and plantation peonage.

Because, in the League of Nations Covenant, Article XXIII, subdivision "E," is this language:

> Provision shall be made through the league to secure and maintain freedom of transit and equitable treatment for the commerce of all member States, with special arrangements in regard to the necessities of regions devastated in the present war.

If this stands unmodified and Mr. Wilson is our member of the Council, he will use it as he did the Underwood-Simmons law to open our ports to these other countries to whatever extent may be demanded by the plantationist program. It would mean for the time being the destruction of organized industry in this country and such a subversion of public order by rampant bolshevism as would justify Mr. Wilson in proclaiming himself dictator in the manner of the plantationist Dru, the hero in the revolutionary book, the authorship of which his friend, Colonel House, has never denied and in which appear many of his own now notorious policies.

In the provision quoted, the words, "with special arrangements with regard to the necessities of regions devastated in the present war," leave a very wide field for the discretion of the Council, which could ordain that this country alone, as being the wealthiest, should open her ports for a series of years for the free admission not only of the products of Belgium, France and Italy, but of Germany, Austria and Hungary also. Our open market here could thus be made the channel by which the Huns could liquidate into cash their industrial products, in order to make cash payments to Belgium, France and Italy. There is no

limit to the latitude of the Council in this respect; and from his history, is there any doubt that Mr. Wilson would approve such an arrangement?

Mr. Wilson has said that he had a single-track mind. Those who know his career, know that it is the mind of the single-track plantationist; and they are able satisfactorily to account for every puzzling act of his administration on that ground, not excepting his otherwise inexplicable attitude towards the Huns during the first years of the war.

Single-track plantationism has had a definite statesmanship behind it almost ever since the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney. Up to that period, the raising of cotton by slave labor in America did not pay. Mr. Wilson himself tells us that the Whitney gin "enabled even an unskilful slave to cleanse a thousand pounds of cotton of its tenacious seed in a single day. Without it, he had been able to cleanse but five or six pounds." (History of the American People, Vol. 3, p. 252.)

Upon this invention, a vision of boundless wealth arose to the plantationist's imagination. The South contained some 448,000,000 of cotton-producing acres (Encyc. Brit.), which was land enough to supply the whole world with cotton for centuries to come. And the world should be his market. He would monopolize it; keep back every rival and then get such prices for cotton as he pleased. Furthermore, cotton could be supplemented with rice, tobacco and sugar; perhaps other things; and all together here would be a field for riches beyond the dreams of avarice. But there was one thing necessary from the start: A producing cost as low as or a trifle lower than that of any other cotton country; and there were thirty-five of these countries.

To be sure, the other countries were not so well located as to world-transportation facilities as our own Southern cotton fields, traversed as they were by rivers, indented by bayous opening into rivers and fringed by the great ocean itself. Nevertheless, once they were well started in the raising of cotton, these other countries, helped by their coolie or peon labor, would be dangerous rivals. Therefore, in the plantationist view, slavery became indispensable, together with conditions which, so far as possible, would limit the demand for white labor to that from the plantationists themselves, purchasing products not embraced in the plantation category; since any increase in plantation cost would be a handicap against American and in favor of foreign-raised cotton. The hostility of the plantationist to multi-industrialism dates from the moment when this plan was formed in his mind. As long ago as 1820, or about a century, the planters of Charleston, South Carolina, memorialized Congress against the injustice of increasing the value of labor by multiplying industries and therefore the labor demand, through encouraging tariffs, claiming that any increase

in Northern wages above wages in England, for instance, because of the tariff, was equivalent to wringing a bounty from the planters equal to the difference in wages thus promoted (Annals of Congress, 1820, 1821, p. 1507.); because the planters were prevented by the tariff from purchasing English products at English costs. This was the position of later plantation statesmen, like Calhoun, Hayne, and McDuffie —splendid men, all, but victims of the instinct of self-preservation. (Congressional Debates, Vol. 8, p. 3827.)

The plantationists were honest, and from their standpoint, reasonable, when they maintained that the right to buy plantation supplies in the cheapest markets was the principle upon which depended their success in monopolizing the world's market for cotton, tobacco, rice and sugar. They tolerated tariffs merely for revenue purposes, strictly limited to government needs; revenue-only tariffs being recognized by them as free-trade tariffs; earlier, on the authority of John C. Calhoun himself, the great South Carolinian free trader, who had formerly been a protectionist (Curtiss, "Industrial Development of Nations," Vol. II, p. 310); and, later, on that of Professor William G. Sumner, of Yale, also a radical free trader. (Protectionism, p. 17.).

The free trade plantation tenet was supplemented by that for free seas; which was further both logical and necessary, since a sea blockade would handicap American cotton as effectually as Northern protection; and both free trade and free seas are laid down as leading principles in the plantation presidential platform of 1856.

It is easy to understand the passionate devotion of the plantationist to these principles, once the underlying fact is seen. It is simply because of a strong reaction in behalf of self-preservation. The Union which so entangled him with the destinies of the multi-track industrialists became irksome to him. In South Carolina he started to secede in 1832 but was temporarily held back by the Clay Compromise, which displaced in stages, by free trade, the protective tariff law of 1832. In 1844, he won with Polk by a campaign of deceit, crying Protection in the North and Free Trade in the South; and in 1846, by a coalition with the Cobden people in Great Britain, simultaneously put this country on a free trade footing, with the repealing of the Corn Laws by Great Britain, thereby opening the ports here for British manufactures in exchange for the opening of the ports there to cotton, tobacco, rice, sugar and other Southern products, incidentally, of course, also to Northern wheat and provisions. In 1860 he seceded, no doubt by concert with Great Britain for her support, inasmuch as Great Britain fitted out crusiers for the destruction of Northern merchant ships; and thereupon adopted a constitution insuring free trade and slavery forever. In 1892, for the first time since the Civil War, he came into

full power in the administration, by the same deception as that practised in 1844, namely, pretending not to stand for free trade; but upon getting power, immediately passing a free trade law, always true to his principle and the necessity, as he saw it, of a low cost for labor here. In 1912, he succeeded once more and by the same deception, Mr. Wilson having given his audiences to understand in his speeches that he was a pretty good protectionist although of a peculiar sort of his own, since he proposed so to regulate the protective tariff as to leave to the weak a better protection than ever, at the same time that he took away from the strong the protection under which they had had a too rank growth ("New Freedom," p. 157). Mr. Wilson thus earned the title of the truest Machievellian ever on the presidential stump in America. True to his plantation birth and rearing, and the plantation party that handed him 136 electoral college votes secured by Ku-Klux methods which he has never found any fault with, Mr. Wilson immediately took the course of all his plantationist predecessors in a like situation, passed a flat free-trade law, to reduce the domestic competition for American producing activity and did what he could in the direction of free seas by opening the Panama Canal, free of toll, to the world and admitting vessels of foreign register to our coasting and lake trade.

Mr. Wilson was born in Virginia and reared in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina, and educated at Princeton, where he distinguished himself as an advocate of free trade against protection. (See "President Wilson from an English Point of View"—a very sympathetic point of view—by H. Wilson Harris.) His book, "The New Freedom," a bound volume of his stump speeches in 1912, is a continuous tirade against multi-track industrialism which he calls by the hard names of "monopolies" "special interests," and the like; and in general behaves exactly as what he is said to describe himself to be, "an unreconstructed rebel." There is nothing new in anything he says against organized industry. His Southern forefathers started on the warpath against corporations which they called by the abhorrent name of "monopolies," nearly a hundred years ago; and he is merely following in their tracks, with the same purpose now which they had then. All his public acts are easily explained upon that hypothesis. He courts labor by eight-hour laws and arbitrarily higher wages, whenever it is within his jurisdiction; advocates laws against child-labor and over-taxing of women; and makes people think he is soft-hearted towards "labor" in doing these things, when his very obvious purpose—obvious to those who have the true key to his conduct—is to handicap American multi-track industrialism to its fall. For he opens the ports and exposes our industries to unmitigated foreign competition, at the same time that he further hampers and handicaps production with these apparently philanthropic laws, the only result of which is to increase the cost of production here and diminish its output as against countries which have no such laws, but the products of which nevertheless come into this market in free competition with our own.

This key of radical plantationism unlocks the mystery of Mr. Wilson's pro-Germanism during the first years of the war and his later insistence that the "unconditional surrender" of the Huns should be conditioned upon their being presented with a free market here under his Fourteen Points (Point Three), if they would be good enough to surrender.

Had Germany won the war, as Mr. Wilson at first expected she would (See "The Real Colonel House," p. 177) "in a few months of swift fighting," is there any doubt that he would have made an alliance with the Kaiser to abrogate the Monroe Doctrine as to the whole of South America, and give Germany a free hand there, turning not only this market of ours but the Canadian as well over to Germany as a free gift, as is all done by Dru, the Colonel's hero? By the way, the Colonel's book was written in the latter part of 1911, when he was very intimate with Mr. Wilson.

DALLAS AND MARSHALL

By Roland Ringwalt.

Seventy-three years ago we had a Vice-President named George M. Dallas. He had made excellent speeches for protection, and was looked on as a man who would stand by his word.

Nevertheless when the low tariff of 1846 came before the Senate he gave the casting vote in its favor. Old friends refused to speak to him; he was called a liar in print; he was insulted in the street, and though he knew that he deserved all this he was fool enough to invite more by pleading his case in a series of letters. No man in Pennsylvania politics ever came in for such violent reproaches, and even beyond the seas he was not safe.

Henry C. Carey, in measured terms but not less cutting on that account, reminded him of what he had brought upon the State that once trusted him. All over Pennsylvania in 1844 the Democratic campaign cry had been, "Polk, Dallas and the Tariff of '42." Without that pledge Pennsylvania would have gone for Clay. Angry at trickery, the State voted in 1848 for Zachary Taylor.

As May was passing out Vice-President Marshall delivered a notable speech at Atlantic City. In this address he said that he had been a low tariff man, practically a free trader, but that war had wrought many changes. He hoped that the

manufacturers would prosper, because on their well being the entire prosperity of the country depends. These are impressive words from one who may have admired Henry Watterson's references to the robber barons. The Vice-President's words did not fall to the ground. They were caught up by the Republican papers, and given a good place in the columns of the Philadelphia Record.

Query: If the Record has printed the speech of Vice-President Marshall will it print General Jackson's letter to Dr. Colman?

As George B. Curtiss in "The Industrial Development of Nations" reminds us, Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Monroe and Adams all recognized the importance of a protective tariff to the farmer, and Andrew Jackson, in a letter to Dr. Colman, of North Carolina, dated April 26, 1824, said:

I will ask what is the real situation of the agriculturist? Where has the American farmer a market for his surplus produce? Except for cotton he has neither a foreign nor a home market. Does not this clearly prove, when there is no market at home or abroad, that there is too much labor employed in agriculture? Common sense at once points out the remedy. Take from agriculture in the United States six hundred thousand men, women and children, and you will at once give a market for more breadstuffs than all Europe now furnishes us. In short, sir, we have been too long subject to the policy of British merchants; it is time we should become a little more Americanized, and, instead of feeding the paupers and laborers of England, feed our own; or else, in a short time, by continuing our present policy, we shall all be rendered paupers ourselves.

This policy of Jackson's was pursued and has been continued ever since, with the exception of two free trade periods from 1833 to 1842, and from 1846 to 1860. A home market of almost incalculable magnitude has been built up and maintained—a market greater by far than all the markets of the world combined, and in this market the American farmer has for a generation and more sold over nine-tenths of his production.

Let us hazard a supposition. If a tariff bill framed in the spirit of Dingley should come before the Senate; if a few members of that body were absent; if the ayes and nays were equal, would Vice-President Marshall vote for it? That would be a strange reversal of history, and the shade of Dallas might reflect—"Had I only done likewise!"

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